policy measures taken by the developing country members for alleviation of poverty, rural development, rural employment and diversification of agriculture, Further, Government can provide adequate protection to women enterpreneurs and workers by resorting to various WTO compatible measures which include appropriate calibaration of applied tariffs within the bound tariffs, imposition of anti-dumping, countervailing duties and safeguard action under certain specified circumstances.

Export of Sugar to Pakistan

†1728. SHRI D.P. YADAV: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether with a view to promoting the export of sugar in the country and agenda has been fixed for the discussion of restoring the export of sugar to Pakistan in the Indo-Pak summit to be held after the arrival of General Parvez Musharraf; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Suicide by unemployed persons in Coimbatore

†1729. SHRI RAMA SHANKER KAUSHIK: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item appearing in Rashtriya Sahara of 2nd May, 2001 pertaining to committing of suicide by the 500 people in Coimbatore, who became unemployed due to globalization;

(b) if so, Government's reaction in this regard; and

(c) what action has been taken by Government for providing employment and immediate financial assistance to the kith and kin of aggrieved families?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (c) Import restrictions have been continuously removed since 1991, as part of economic liberalization

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

programme. However, the removal of restrictions has not altered the overall rate of growth of imports. The growth rate of imports was 15.3% in 1993-94, 23.1% in 1994-95, 36.4% in 1995-96, 13.2% in 1996-97, 11% in 1997-98, 14.2% in 1998-99 and 13.6.% in 1999-2000 (in Rs. terms). The import growth rate during the year 2000-2001 was only 5.59% in Rs. terms and 0.27% in US dollar terms. If non oil impots are taken into consideration the picture of imports is all the more reassuring. Such non oil imports, have in fact, registered a negative growth rate of 14.66% during 2000-2001.

Even at micro level the growth in imports have not been of alarming nature. The import data for 714 items, QRs on which were removed on 31.03.2000, for the year 2000-2001, indicates a growth in import of these items by less than 3% .Similalry, the import of 300 sensitive items, which is being monitored by a Standing Group of Secretaries, indicates a decline of 13% during the first three months of this financial year.

As can be seen from above, the fears of domestic market being swamped by imports have not come true. There is nothing to indicate that suicides as mentioned in the newspaper reports, if at all true, have any causal linkage with the removal of quantitative restrictions.

However, the imports are being constantly monitored and the Government is absolutely determined to ensure through appropriate use of tariff and other available mechanisms that imports do not cause any serious detriment or injury to domestic industry.

Hike in the price of postcard

1730. SHRIMATI SARLA MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to reconsider the 100 percent hike in the price of the ordinary postcard which is the medium of communication of common man; and

(b) if so, by when and to what extent?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) and (b) During the last 23 years, the postal rates for postcard was revised only twice *i.e.* on 1.6.1978 and on 1.6.1997. During this period the cost of providing this service has increased many times. The cost of providing postcard service for the year 2000-2001 (Projection) is about 580.39